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ABSTRACT

In an era of decreasing funding of the human services sector, it is imperative that the service sector be more effective and efficient. This study examined the outcomes of a management development intervention. Subjects (N=187) were middle managers in the helping professions. The experimental group was composed of 100 managers who voluntarily agreed to participate in a 20-hour management development seminar sponsored by a state agency. The control group was composed of 87 persons nominated by subjects in the experimental group as being similar to themselves in employment position, length of management, educational background, size of agency, and primary service goal. The seminar was conducted in a small group format and focused on the role of the manager, philosophy of management, provision of useful feedback, and motivation. Results suggest that participants did learn about topic areas covered when compared to controls, except in the area of role of the manager, which suggests that both experimental and control subjects had some idea of their role. Data from a follow-up interview suggest that participants did make use of the skills and knowledge they gained from particpation in the seminar, although changes were of a modest nature. In summary, this study demonstrated that a management development seminar for human services managers can result in cognitive learning as well as modest on-the-job changes in behavior, affect, and cognitions. (ABL)

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OUTCOMES OF A MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR FOR MANAGERS IN THE HUMAN SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing process within as well as the impact of a management development seminar for managers in the human services were examined. Outcomes such as learning and on the job behaviors were compared to those obtained from a control group. Preliminary test results suggested that the seminar positively influenced both participants' knowledge of as well as on the job behaviors.

Introduction

In an era of decreasing funding of the human service sector, it is imperative that the the efficiency and effectiveness of the service sector to be more effective at their tasks. This study examines the outcomes of a management development intervention, specifically the Management Development Seminar sponsored by the Illinois Institute of Developmental Disabilities. While the larger study of which this is a part focused on both the relations among process variables as well as outcomes of management training, this work focuses in on outcomes of management training as these are the "bottom line" for any training program. This study represents an effort to synthesize the findings of the group dynamics/group psychotherapy literature as well as the organization development (OD) literature, and apply this synthesis to a small-group management development intervention. The overall purpose of the seminar is to impart knowledge regarding managerial topic areas covered, promote exploration of participant assumptive systems, and develop specific managerial skills. Thus, although a management development seminar is neither an OD intervention nor a human growth group, it shares many important commonalities with them. Findings from both of these areas may, therefore, be relevant for understanding the processes which occur in a management development seminar.

A number of researchers (Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles, 1973; Yalom, 1975; Shaw, 1981) have investigated the relations of process variables to outcomes in various forms of therapy and growth-oriented groups. Schmuck and Schmuck (1983) have suggested that group processes are operating within classrooms. Their book explores how the processes of group interaction combine to facilitate or restrain cognitive and affective learning in the classroom. They note that many of their concepts have been derived from research on

interpersonal relations, group dynamics, and organizational psychology. Results from these areas generally suggest that group training programs result in positive outcomes such as improved behavior in a variety of settings. Most researches in the Organizational Development (OD) literature conclude that group processes at a systems level are positively related to outcomes (Bennis, Benne, and Chin, 1969).

However, despite the findings that group training has been effective in a number of settings, the area of management training in the human services is in its infancy. Little has been done to investigate either process variables or outcomes in management training the human services. This lack represents a gap in the literature which the present research attempts to fill.

In sum the focus for the present report was:

1). The ability of a management training intervention with managers in the human services to influence cognitive learning as well as behavior, affect, and cognitions on the job.

Methods

Subjects

A total of 187 middle managers employed in the helping professions were involved in this study. The experimental group was composed of 100 middle managers who voluntarily agreed to participate in a 20 hour management development seminar sponsored by a state agency, The Illinois Institute for Developmental Disabilities (Training Division). Participants were either sponsored by their employing agency or provided their own funding. More than one person from the same agency could participate in the management development seminar. Subjects came from small and moderately large urban as

well as rural areas. The management experience of subjects ranged from minimal to extensive, and the size of employing agency also varied. Results from the Demographic Questionnaire are presented.

The control group (87 subjects) was be composed of persons nominated by each participant in the seminar as being similar to that participant. Subjects were further requested to nominate peers not at their current work site if possible. Otherwise, participants could nominate other workers from their own agency. Participants were further requested not to discuss the content of the seminar with persons whom they nominated until after the nominee had participated in the study. This was done to minimize the possibility of contamination. Subjects nominated up to three peers whom they considered to be similar to themselves along a number of dimensions. These dimensions are: 1) employment position (job title, level of management), 2) length of time employed in management positions, 3) educational background, 4) size of the employing agency, and 5) primary service goal of the work site e.g., rehabilitation workshop, or residential facility. All the nominated peers were contacted by the experimenter and enlisted in the research endeavor.

The Illinois Institute for Developmental Disabilities (IIDD) Management Development Seminar

The management development seminar was conducted according to the normal agency program schedule. The seminar consisted of 20 hours of training in three sessions of eight hours. The seminar covered a period of up to five weeks. The seminar combined didactic with experiential input. The seminar was conducted in a small-group format. There was a focus on small-group activities and interaction among participants was encouraged. Much time was

devoted to active problem solving and to the analysis of actual situations identified by the participants themselves. The seminar focused on a number of different areas such as role of the manager, philosophy of management, providing useful feedback, and motivation. The overall purpose of the management development seminar was to impart knowledge regarding the topic areas covered, promote perspective taking regarding managerial philosophy and the role of the middle manager, and also encourage the development of specific skills.

The Instruments

The Cognitive Knowledge Questionnaire

The cognitive knowledge questionnaire adapts items assessing cognitive knowledge learned in management development seminars first developed by London (1983). Additional items were developed as well. The instrument is in multiple choice format. Each item consists of a question and four possible answers (three distracters). Subjects received a summary score of all items answered correctly as well as a score for items answered correctly within certain topic areas. These topic areas are role of the manager, philosophy of management, providing useful feedback.

Follow Up Role-Related Change Interview

This is a telephone interview used to collect data regarding role-related changes from both experimental and control group members approximately eight weeks subsequent to completion of the posttest measures. All respondents are asked the primary and closing questions. Probes are used in attempts to elicit more complete responses from respondents who, initially, provide sparse answers. The total interview requires 25 minutes of actual telephone contact with the respondent.

The interviewer takes notes of respondent answers during the course of the interview and after. In addition, to assure complete understanding, the interviewer reflects key phrases of the respondent's answers back to the respondent. These reflections by the interviewer are recorded by a tape recorder placed in the same room as the interviewer. The telephone conversation, as such, is not recorded; only the interviewers statements are recorded. This interview is based upon a number of sources: 1) anecdotal reports of experienced leaders of management development seminars, and 2) pilot work performed by the author with participants of recent management development seminars.

Experimental Procedure

The experimenter met with members of each Management Development Seminar on the first day of each training program. The trainees were given an opportunity to voice any concerns or questions. Subjects were informed that participants in the experiment was totally voluntary and not a part of the regular agency training program. A similar process was conducted via a phone interview with members of the control group. All members of both the control and experimental group completed the pre and posttest as well as a three month follow-up phone interview. (See Table 1).

Table 1

Administration of Measures

Measure	Pre Test		Post Test		Follow Up	
	Cntl.	Exp.	Cntl.	Exp.	Cntl.	Exp.
Demographic	X	X				
Cognitive Knowledge	X	X	X	X		
Behavior Change Assessment					X	X

Results

Preliminary Analyses

An initial view of the demographic data was gained by calculating the N, mean, and standard deviation for the demographic variables for both the experimental and control groups. These results are presented in Table 2 An exploratory Discriminant analysis correctly classified only a modest percentage of subjects into group. Results from a general linear models procedure were not significant at .01 level except for length of time in the helping profession in predicting group membership from demographic variables. These two findings suggest that both experimental and control groups are of a similar composition.

Means and standard deviations for cognitive learning for all areas as well as specific content areas. (See Table 3).

Demographic Variables

Table 2

	Experimental		Control	
	N	S.D.	N	S.D.
Sex				
Male	23		24	
Female	77		63	
Age	38.20	10.54	37.24	9.24
Education				
Some High School	2		2	
High School Diploma	15		6	
Some College	40		34	
College Diploma	20		14	
Some Grad. Counseling	12		14	
Master's Degree	10		16	
Work toward Ph.D.	.		1	
Doctorate	1			
Time Current Position	3.65	3.70	4.14	3.76
Time with Agency	7.30	5.59	7.22	4.65
Time Helping Professions	8.66	5.34	11.13	6.77
Time Management Positions	4.60	4.87	6.52	5.90

* Discriminant analysis showed that only a modest number of subjects were correctly classified into groups.

Means and standard deviations were completed for follow-up variables. (See Table 4). The experimental group showed improved behaviors, affect, and attitudes while the control group showed either less positive change or a decrease in these skills.

Table 3

Cognitive Learning

	Experimental	S.D.	Control	S.D.
Total Score	4.94	3.11	3.25	2.40
Role of the Manager	1.58	1.16	1.79	1.04
Theory X-Y	1.61	1.13	.66	.95
Feedback	1.62	1.26	.73	1.06

Table 4

Follow Up on-the-Job

	Experimental		Control	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Change in Perspective	5.08	1.01	4.36	1.12
Change in Motivation	5.04	1.19	3.5	2.09
Change in Stress Level	4.9	1.47	3.3	2.02
Change in Handling Stress	5.12	1.14	3.64	1.45
Change in Decision Making	5.15	1.02	4.48	0.96
Change in Others Behavior	5.16	1.02	4.71	1.11

Table 5

General Linear Models Procedure

	DF	Type I SS	F Value	Pr > F
Dependent variable: Total Posttest Score				
Source				
Pretest	1	192.27	27.62	0.0001
Group	1	50.49	7.25	0.0077
Pretest*	1	3.04	0.44	0.51
Dependent Variable: Role of the Manager				
Source				
Pretest	1	0.07	0.05	0.82
Group	1	2.65	2.20	0.14
Dependent Variable: Theory X-Y				
Source				
Pretest	1	43.47	48.42	0.0001
Group	1	18.00	20.05	0.0001
Dependent Variable: Feedback				
Source				
Pretest	1	45.10	40.93	0.0001
Group	1	22.89	20.77	0.0001

Table 6

Follow Up: General Linear Models Procedure

	DF	Type I SS	F Value	Pr > F
Dependent Variable: Change in Perspective Source: Group	1	20.45	19.18	0.0001
Change in Handling Stress Source: Group	1	74.24	84.29	0.0001
Change in Decision Making Source: Group	1	17.087	17.16	0.0001
Change in Motivation Source: Group	1	92.39	76.96	0.0001
Change in Stress Level Source: Group	1	100.80	50.82	0.0001

Main Analyses

A number of tests were performed to look at the focal area of this study: The ability of a management development seminar to positively influence participant cognitive learning and on the job changes in behavior affect, and cognitions.

A general linear models procedure was used to examine between group differences. A significant effect in the predicted direction was found for total cognitive learning as well as the specific content areas: Theory X - Y and feedback. (See Table 5). The pretest score for cognitive learning was used as a covariate. The interaction Pretest * Group was not significant indicating that participants relative pretest standings did not significantly vary between groups.

To assess the impact of the management development seminar upon actual on-the-job behaviors, cognitions, and attitudes a series of general linear models procedures were carried out (See Table 6). The general linear model was chosen due to the unequal numbers of observations for the different groups, experimental and control. The effects were significant in the predicted direction. This suggests that participants were able to make on-the-job use of the skills and knowledge they gained in the management seminar and that participants reported changes in their behavior affect and cognitions at the job. These changes at follow-up occurred despite participants coming from numerous agencies with a wide range of organizational climate and physical setting, e.g., rural vs. urban. Anecdotally, numerous participants mentioned during the follow-up role related change interview that they had applied the skills and knowledge gained in the management seminar to their personal lives.

Discussion

The area of management training for managers in the human services is in its infancy yet is of crucial importance. In an era of ever-tightening budgets effective and cost efficient means of providing services to clients must be developed. One important means of improving service is management development training. Every manager trained, can positively influences peers, subordinates and superiors through the exercise of newly learned skills. Thus a large impact can result from a relatively small investment.

The focal area of this study posed the question: Can a management development seminar positively influence the knowledge base of participants as well as their on-the-job behaviors, affect, and cognitions? The general linear moel procedure for cognitive learning suggested that indeed participants did learn about topic areas covered when compared to controls. The one area where this was not the case was, role of the manager which suggests that subjects, both experimental and conrol had some idea of their role. This is not suprising given the length of experience in human services of participants in this study.

The data from the follow-up interview suggest that participants did indeed make use of the skills and knowledge they gained from participantion in the seminar. However, changes noted despite their statistical significance were of a modest nature. Thus, one cannot expect one 20 hour intervention to radically alter a manager's on-the-job behaviors. However, it is impressive that modest changes were present three months after the intervention.

This study has demonstrated that a management development seminar for managers in the human services can result in cognitive learning as well as modest on-the-job changes in behavior, affect, and cognitions. In an era of diminishing resouces in the social services sector, management development training, can become a cost effective means of improving the quality of service to clients.

This area of research is in its infancy and much needs to be done. The influence of participant readiness for training and its influence an outcome variables awaits investigation. In addition, the delineation of the role of organizational climate as a moderator of outcomes of management training in the human services has received scant attention.

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